

Last week, the House voted on legislation dealing with farm policy. Those of you who aren't farmers might be thinking, why is this important to me? Well, federal farm policy affects each one of us that consumes food from the U.S. supply. The price of our grocery bills, the quality of our food, and the security and safety of the food supply are all important to consumers and hardworking taxpayers. These issues are all directly affected by legislation I supported last week, the FARRM Act, better known as the Farm Bill (H.R. 1947).

I strongly believe in reducing wasteful Washington spending. Folks are struggling and sacrificing to make ends meet and to provide opportunities for their children. That's why I voted in favor of a farm bill that, while not perfect, proposed to reduce waste and make government more accountable, while also including important provisions to improve rural broadband access and improvements in the utilization of resources dedicated to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

Specifically, this bill made changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly known as the food stamp program, to save more than \$20 billion. These reforms, the first to SNAP since the welfare reforms of nearly 20 years ago, would establish additional work requirements for able-bodied SNAP benefit recipients and allow states to implement drug testing as a condition of receiving benefits. The bill also included savings of \$14 billion by overturning the long standing system of direct payments to farmers, and contained consolidations of multiple conservation programs, saving another \$6.9 billion.

The Farm Bill is an especially significant issue for Virginia, where agriculture is the single largest industry, bigger even than the defense sector. In our Commonwealth alone, agriculture and forestry contribute \$79 billion and 500,000 jobs to the economy. At the same time, many of our neighbors can tell you just how important various parts of the bill are to their communities. For example, folks in the Northern Neck know all too well how challenging it is to do something

as simple as check your email when you don't have access to high-speed internet. I was proud to rise on the floor to defend the importance of rural broadband initiatives, an issue I've been passionate about since my time in local elected office. H.R. 1947 also included an amendment I authored that would promote accountability and improved oversight over Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. I believe that these important initiatives, combined with reforms to agriculture programs and the significant reductions to SNAP, must be part of any long term agriculture legislation passed by Congress. It is absolutely critical that a long term farm bill be signed into law in order to reduce spending and change the way Washington does business.

This bill is not perfect; many believe it didn't cut enough. I hear and understand those concerns. However, I believe some cuts are better than no cuts at all. This bill proposed to take us in the right direction. Unfortunately, it failed to pass the House, which leaves us with the status quo: more spending and no reform.

My mission each and every day is to represent the people of the First District to the best of my ability, and that necessitates supporting thoughtful policies that rein in government spending and reform the way our government operates. I will continue working toward those goals, and as always, hope you'll share your thoughts with me.

Independence Day is fast approaching, and I hope that you will all take a moment amid the barbeques and fireworks to think about the history of our nation and the reason we celebrate this pivotal date in our journey as a Republic. More importantly, I hope that we all keep in mind the brave men and women in uniform who serve each and every day, sacrificing selflessly so that we can remain the greatest nation the world has ever known. These dedicated patriots and their families truly deserve our appreciation.

I hope that everyone has a safe and relaxing Independence Day, and I look forward to seeing many of you around the district. The main streets of Virginia's First District are full of ideas to

get our economy back on track, and your feedback is critically important to me as I serve you. I can be reached by telephone at (202) 225-4261, through my website ( [www.wittman.house.gov](http://www.wittman.house.gov) ), on Facebook ( [www.facebook.com/reprobwittman](http://www.facebook.com/reprobwittman) ), and via Twitter ( [www.twitter.com/robwittman](http://www.twitter.com/robwittman) ).

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee.*